

# The RIPLINE

December 1999



Welcome to the Christmas issue of the Ripline and the last of this term. This Ripline is being produced for the first time by Tim Locke. Previous editions have been produced by Will Temple and Anne McNamara, so thanks goes out to these individuals.

## Flying News

The Weather has been bad for the month of October (Unless you were in America). The one thing we can't control is the British Weather. We have still been out there though when the weather has been fly able. One such example is Sunday 21/11/99 we managed two awesome flights on what turned out to be a very special day, the anniversary of mans first flight in a balloon. On the morning I took three first time flyers and the BUHABS pilot under training for a lovely long flight down onto the Somerset levels. They said they loved the flight but did not enjoy my earth, wind, fire ceremony at the café afterwards!!! (Ask Tim Dudman for an explanation). In the afternoon our newest pilot Tim D took another load of BUHABS members for a flight from Bath and across the village of Coombe Hay he flew for about an hour and then topped of a perfect flight by demonstrating a excellent landing. So there you go, we have been flying whenever we can.

I hope many of you will now be settled into University and will have probably tried out some of your less weather dependent clubs. If this is the case then now is the perfect time to sign up to go ballooning. In the last couple of weeks there have been many spaces on the signing up list. This means that if you were keeping away because the lists were always full you will now find space. For those who have decided to give up signing up because the weather has been bad lately then **DON'T GIVE UP**. The only person you will be letting down is yourself. You have paid £30 (that is a lot by student standards) to join our club please make sure you get your moneys worth. It really is the cheapest way you will probably ever get to go ballooning and what's more coming out with us is fun (I hope). **SO KEEP SIGNING UP!!!!!!**

If any of you have any questions about the club or flying please feel free to ring me. My mobile number is 0799 05 05 339, it is on 24 hours a day, but between the hours of 2400 & 0600 I will not be best pleased. Well I hope to see you all soon, if not flying then at our up an coming Christmas pub social which will be advertised via the postcards as we did with our first social. So all that's left for me to say is Merry Christmas and have a top Millennium.

Soft Landings

Lee Hooper  
President of BUHABS 1995 -

## Notes form the editor.....

Although the last few months have not been that good for flying with the introduction of midweek flying starting up soon there should be an improvement. To take part simply fill out the enclosed form and we will do the rest. With articles from the new PU/t and Tim D on just how the weather works this ripline is packed full of useful information. However there is always room to add your comments to the Ripline. As it is your magazine you get to have a say in what goes in, so if you want to write about your first flight or an experience with the club then fill free to send details to me along with a photo or two, to [REDACTED]

## Note from the New Pilot Under Training (PUT)

This is a short account of my history in BUHABS. I joined BUHABS for the first time at FRESH last year and have had a year of really enjoyable flying. Before joining BUHABS I had flown in gliders and other aircraft before but ballooning is something completely different.....

My first introduction to ballooning was on a cold November morning about this time last year. I took up a last minute place on the sign up list by replying to an e-mail on a Friday afternoon. The following morning we met at the union, drove to Ashton Court and set up the BUHABS balloon. We were in the company of Giraffe (Lee's balloon) and a couple of rides balloons (Commercial balloons with fee paying passengers). At first the whole situation was very daunting. I did not know anyone there or anything about ballooning at all. The preparations went completely over my head as I expect happens for everyone on their first outing. When we were ready to go Robin flew us out of Ashton Court and across the city. Balloon flying was completely different to anything I had experienced before. You see the world a lot closer and progress is a lot less hurried than flying or gliding. We flew close enough to see and hear people on the ground and descended even lower when we left the city. At the end of the flight the landing was slightly bumpy. This was mainly because I did not know what to expect and didn't hold on tightly.

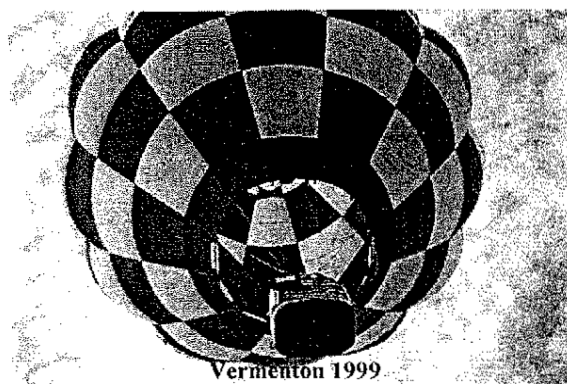
From that first flight I flew again when I could, weather and work permitting, and was invited to join BUHABS on their holiday to Vermenton in France. Tom lead the expedition and eight of us crammed into the BUHABS van complete with luggage. It was not a very comfortable journey. We drove non-stop with four of us taking it in turns to drive. In Vermenton we were joined by Paul and Lee, who were teaching Scott Ellis (BBC) to fly in the Fiesta Balloon, and Robin. We enjoyed a mix of flying, French food and drink, sight seeing and sunbathing. By the end of the week I could probably rig a balloon with my eyes shut! Mixing with some of the established BUHABS members taught me a lot and was great fun.

On return to Bristol it was time for the 21st Balloon Fiesta at Ashton Court. I flew on the PR day from the Lloyds

building up to the Downs with Paul. The BUHABS balloon made an appearance on the weekend itself and Paul flew some of our sponsors. The balloon was also taken to a weekend fiesta at Newark although we didn't fly in the end due to poor weather. In September Tim passed his flying test and became BUHABS pilot number 14. My application to the committee was successful and made me PUT number 15.

My first training flight was with Paul from Horsey to Easton Grey. I had seen enough riggings and inflations to give it a go myself. It was my first 'hands on' with the burner controls. We set off and practised climbing and descending and straight-and-level flight, which is harder than you might think when you first start. On every flight there seems to be plenty to think about - height, fuel, navigation, animals etc. This is something I had not really appreciated as a passenger. I have now flown five training flights and had some interesting experiences brushing hedges and dragging in fields. For the last few weeks the weather has not been flyable but I am looking forward to my next training flight soon. I hope everyone who joined at FRESH this year enjoys ballooning as much as I have. Be persistent with the sign up lists, it's well worth it.

Simon

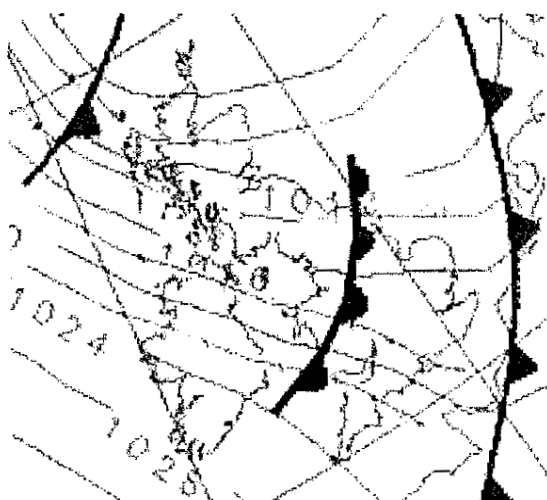


## *WEATHER TO FLY OR NOT....*

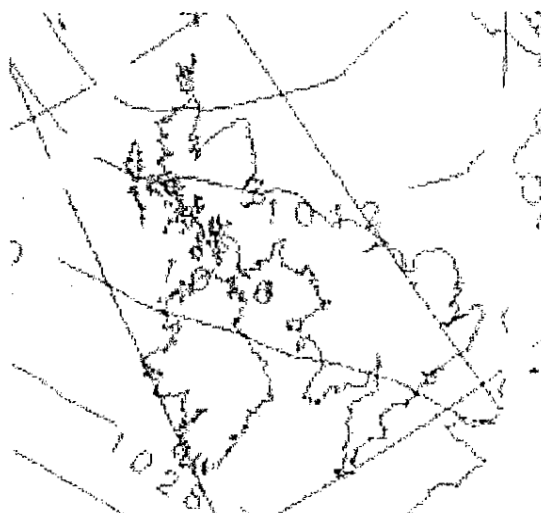
After a fantastic summer of flying to end the BUHABS year, five of us went flying in the first week of term and then the weather went cack! Hopefully by the time you read this we will have gone flying a few more times but I'll try to explain how the pilots decide whether to fly a particular slot...or not!

### **WEDNESDAY EVENINGS:**

On Wednesdays we have a look at the weather charts to see which of the four weekend slots will be flyable. The pressure charts show if it will be too windy or not:



This is bad!



This is fine.

As you will have noticed recently, we have been trying to fly all the slots. Even when the weather looks bad it can change and we don't want to miss any at the moment.

### **HALF AN HOUR BEFORE PHONE-IN:**

We take the decision to fly just before you phone in. There is a special balloon pilots briefing service run by the local region of the British Balloon and Airship Club. There is also an automated system that allows us to find out aviation actuals and forecasts for the next few hours provided by the National Air Traffic Service that we use to find out weather at RAF Lyneham and Bristol International.

### ***So why can't we fly then?***

**WIND:** If the wind is forecast to be over 10 knots on the surface we won't fly. The air needs to be fairly still to inflate the balloon and also to land it

without requiring a landing strip! Sometimes there is an inversion layer of cold, still air on the ground up to several hundred feet in the mornings and this can allow us to fly even if the wind at 2000 feet is quite fast.

**RAIN:** You get wet - you take off - the van gets stuck in the mud - you get wet - you land in the mud - you get wet - our very expensive balloon goes mouldy! Hmmm - not ideal.

**THUNDER:** Thunder clouds suck - quite literally. Not wanting to get sucked in, we stay firmly on the ground.

**MIST/FOG:** Normally only a problem on morning flights. There is a minimum visibility we need for flying legally but it often clears for take-off.

**CLOUD:** Certain cloud types are associated with weather that is unsuitable for flying like cumulus clouds during the middle of summer days that indicate rising thermals. The height of the cloudbase and the amount of coverage are also important especially when flying in controlled airspace around Bristol Airport.



Flying above cloud in BUHABS 4 - the Fiesta Balloon

So keep signing up through the rest of the winter because its worth it when the flights go ahead. There's something special about flying when the landscape is whitened with frost. Who knows, next term we may even get to fly in the snow...

*Tim.*